

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method for internal fixation of vertebra of the spine to facilitate graft fusion includes steps for excising the nucleus of an affected disc, preparing a bone graft, instrumenting the vertebrae for fixation, and introducing the bone graft into the resected nuclear space. Disc resection is conducted through two portals through the annulus, with one portal supporting resection instruments and the other supporting a viewing device. The fixation hardware is inserted through small incisions aligned with each pedicle to be instrumented. The hardware includes bone screws, fixation plates, engagement nuts, and linking members. In an important aspect of the method, the fixation plates, engagement nuts and linking members are supported suprafascially but subcutaneously so that the fascia and muscle tissue are not damaged. The bone screw is configured to support the fixation hardware above the fascia. In a further aspect of the invention, a three component dilator system is provided for use during the bone screw implantation steps of the method.